AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus which acquires coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium, wherein the coded data is ~~recording~~ hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images ~~in the unit of hierarchically encoding~~, the apparatus comprising:

an input interface which receives signals from [[an]] the external recording medium;

an image input controller which acquires the coded data by said input interface first only at a [[low]] first level of ~~the unit of~~ hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images;

a decoder which decodes the coded data acquired by said image input controller; and

a storage device which stores data decoded by said decoder;

wherein the image input controller receives data at a second level of hierarchical encoding for each of the plurality of images after data acquisition of the data at the first level of hierarchical encoding is completed and during decoding of the data at the first level of hierarchical encoding, and wherein the first level includes a lower resolution than the second level.

2.   (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the [[low]] first level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

3.   (Cancelled)

4.   (Original) The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a print engine which prints an image based on data decoded by said decoder.

5.   (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

an index maker which makes an index image of the plurality of images based on the data at a low the first level of the unit of hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

a print engine which prints the index image received from said index maker;

an operational device which instructs to make an index to said index maker; and

a controller which allows to activate said index maker when instructed by said operational device after data acquisition of the data at a low the first level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is completed.

6.   (Canceled)

7.   (Currently Amended) The image processing apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising a display device which displays a state of data acquisition of the coded data divided by the levels of ~~the unit of~~ hierarchical encoding.

8.   (Cancelled)

9.   (Currently Amended) An image processing method for acquiring coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium, wherein the coded data is ~~which records~~ hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images ~~in the unit of hierarchically encoding~~, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

acquiring the coded data first only at a [[low]] first level of ~~the unit of~~ hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of images; [[and]]

decoding the coded data acquired from the external recording medium; and

acquiring data at a second level of hierarchical encoding for each of the plurality of images after data acquisition of the data at the first level of hierarchical encoding is completed and during decoding of the data at the first level of hierarchical encoding, wherein the first level includes a lower resolution than the second level.

10.   (Currently Amended) The image processing method according to claim 9, wherein the [[low]] first level of ~~the unit of~~ hierarchical encoding is the lowest level.

11.   (Cancelled)

12.   (Currently Amended) The image processing method according to claim 9, further comprising:

making an index image on the plurality of images based on the data at ~~a low~~ the first level of ~~the unit of~~ hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

receiving an instruction by a user to make an index; and

activating the ~~step of~~ making of the index image when instructed by the user after data acquisition of the data at ~~a low~~ the first level of ~~the unit of~~ hierarchical encoding is completed.

13.   (Canceled)

14.   (Currently Amended) The image processing method according to claim 12, further comprising ~~the step of~~ displaying a state of data acquisition of the coded data divided by the levels of ~~the unit of~~ hierarchical encoding.

15.   (Currently Amended) A computer readable recording medium which records an image processing program for acquiring coded data of a plurality of images from an external recording medium, wherein the coded data is ~~which records~~ hierarchically encoded data of the plurality of images ~~in the unit of hierarchically encoding~~, the program comprising ~~the steps of~~:

acquiring the coded data first only at a [[low]] first level of the unit of

hierarchical encoding from the external recording medium over the plurality of

images; [[and]]

decoding the coded data acquired from the external recording medium; and

acquiring data at a second level of hierarchical encoding for each of the

plurality of images after data acquisition of the data at the first level of hierarchical

encoding is completed and during decoding of the data at the first level of

hierarchical encoding, wherein the first level includes a lower resolution than the

second level.

16. (Currently Amended) The computer readable recording medium

according to claim 15, wherein the [[low]] first level of the unit of hierarchical

encoding is the lowest level.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) The computer readable recording medium

according to claim 15, the program further comprising the steps of:

making an index image on the plurality of images based on the data at a low

the first level of the unit of hierarchical encoding on the plurality of images;

receiving an instruction by a user to make an index; and

activating the step of making of the index image when instructed by the user

after data acquisition of the data at a low the first level of the unit of hierarchical

encoding is completed.

19.   (Canceled)

20.   (Currently Amended)   The computer readable recording medium according to claim 18, the program further comprising the step of displaying that an image can be printed after data at the [[high]] second level of the unit of hierarchical encoding is acquired for the image, and of outputting the image based on the data acquired on the image when instructed by a user.

21.   (Currently Amended)   The computer readable recording medium according to claim 18, the program further comprising the step of displaying a state of data acquisition of the coded data divided by the levels of the unit of hierarchical encoding.

22.   (Previously Presented)   The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the coded data is compressed data.

23.   (Previously Presented)   The image processing method according to claim 9, wherein the coded data is compressed data.

24.   (Previously Presented)   The computer readable recording medium according to claim 15, wherein the coded data is compressed data.